



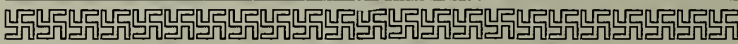
THE TWO BOY CZARS

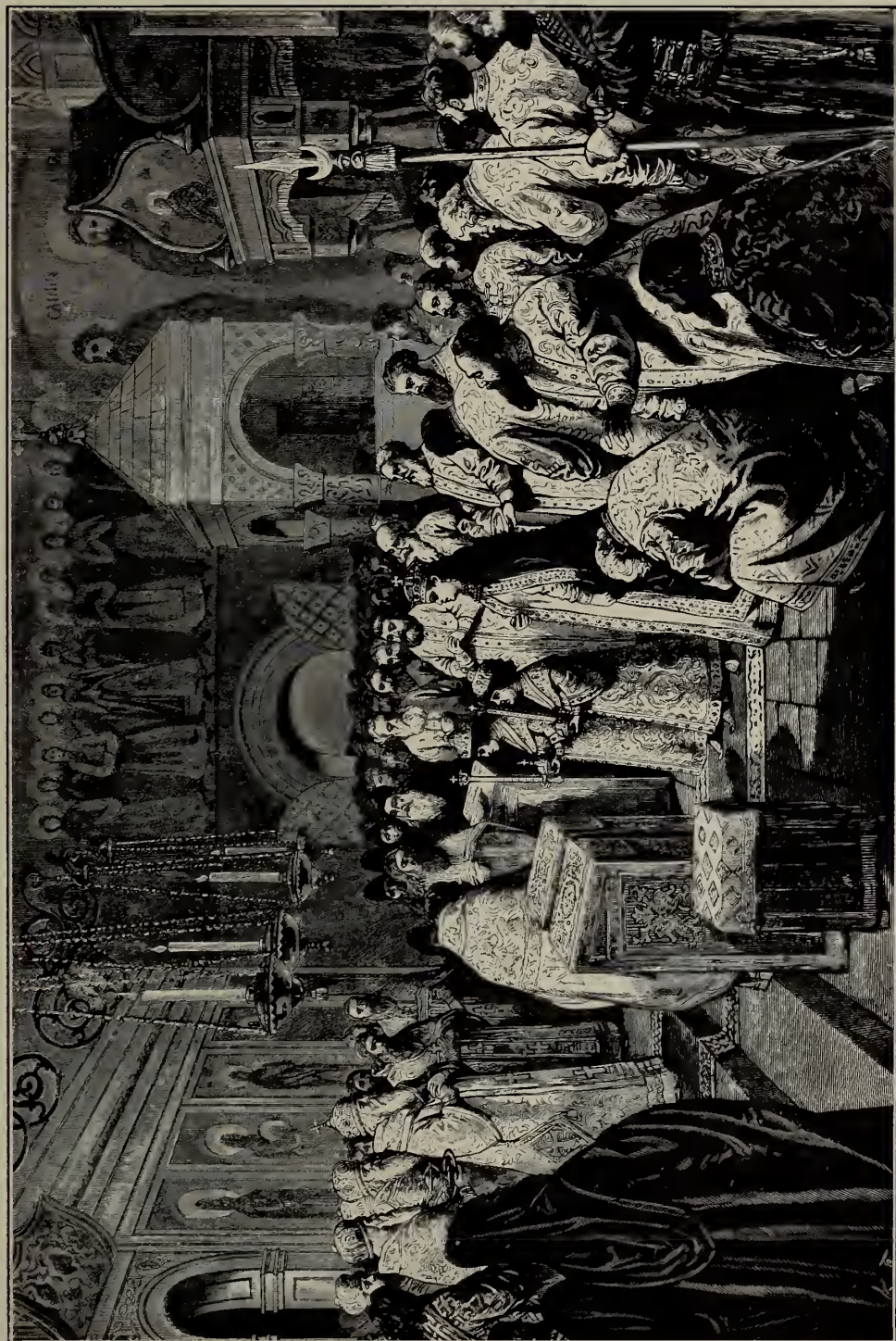
(Peter the Great and His Elder Half-Brother Ivan Are Crowned Together)

From a series of old Russian prints of the coronations

WE come now to the reign of the most celebrated man of the Russian race, Peter the Great. The Czar Alexis left three young sons. The eldest of these succeeded him, but soon died, leaving as heirs his two younger brothers. Of these the elder, Ivan, was an imbecile, the younger was Peter the Great. Ivan and Peter were children of two different mothers; and from the struggle of the families of the two mothers, each seeking the power of the throne, arose two parties which long disturbed the Russian state.

At first both the council of the nobles and the Patriarch of the Church agreed that the imbecile Ivan should be passed over, and Peter be made czar. But when the members of Peter's family began to seize all the high offices of state, then Ivan's more powerful family planned a revolt. Ivan had a very able older sister, Sophia, just of age, vigorous and handsome. In the earlier centuries, women in Russia had always been kept in strict seclusion, like Asiatic women. But that custom was now breaking down; and Sophia, abandoning it completely, appeared in public as a champion of woman's independence. She could scarcely hope to be made sovereign in her own right; but she did by impassioned appeals to the soldiery rouse them to revolt against the injustice done her little brother Ivan. So when the actual coronation of the czar was performed, Ivan was associated with Peter, and the two little lads were crowned together as joint rulers.







EUDOXIA PREPARES FOR HER WEDDING

(Peter the Great Marries Into a Powerful Russian Family)

After a painting by the Russian artist, Konstantin Makowski

THE energetic Sophia was now made regent of the kingdom for her brother Ivan and her little half-brother Peter. Naturally she had no love for the latter. Indeed, when the soldiers had risen in favor of Ivan, Sophia had sought to have them kill Peter and his mother; and her victims had only escaped by fleeing to a monastery, where they clung to the altar in terror.

Hence while Peter was now nominally czar, he was kept in much subjection. What education he gained was self-acquired. Fortunately for him he drifted into friendship with some foreigners who had settled in Moscow, especially the Swiss soldier of fortune, Francis Lefort. Lefort formed a little military company in which he set Peter to drilling, and taught him the value of personal labor. Sophia rather despised the lad who thus devoted himself to what she accounted low company and idle play.

Peter's first independent act was when as a youth of seventeen he wedded his first wife, Eudoxia. She was of high Russian family, and his mother arranged the wedding to strengthen his position; though Eudoxia and her people naturally hesitated to ally themselves with this lonely young czar in opposition to the powerful Sophia. Indeed, Sophia forbade the match; but Peter persisted, and the wedding took place.







PETER TRIUMPHS OVER SOPHIA

(At Peter's Command the Regent is Seized and Imprisoned)

From a painting by the Russian artist, A. Karelin

PETER soon followed his marriage, his first act of independence, with a second and decisive stroke. He declared himself old enough to rule in his own right, and called on Sophia to resign the regency. She refused and sought to persuade her former adherents, the soldiery, to make her sovereign in her own name. The men to whom she appealed were the famous Strelitz or native palace guard, noted for centuries for their conservatism, their devotion to the czar and to ancient Russian customs. As they had never heard of women rulers of Russia, they refused to have one now, and clung to Peter. At his command a body of them broke into the regent's rooms and carried her away. She was imprisoned in a convent and kept there till her death.

All of Sophia's relatives were removed from office, and the kin of Peter's mother and wife were put in power. To his poor half-brother Ivan, however, Peter showed every consideration, retaining him upon the throne in splendor till Ivan died a few years later.

Peter himself now assumed direction of everything. His purpose, stimulated by his foreign friends, was to make Russia a powerful kingdom in the European manner. He superseded Sophia in 1689 and ruled as an independent sovereign for thirty-six years. During this reign he completely revolutionized Russia.









PETER LEARNS FROM WESTERN EUROPE

(Peter the Great in Holland Studying Shipbuilding)

From a painting by the Dutch artist, Felix Cogen

THE stupendous task of modernizing Russia, which the youthful Peter had assumed, he carried out with singular skill and strength. His first step was to win for his country a footing on the seashore and there build her a navy, so that her people might intermingle more with other nations. - With this in view Peter first fought the Turks, who still held the coast of the Black Sea, though the allegiance of the Cossacks to Russia had made that country mistress of all the land except the coast. Having won a seaport from the Turks and finding he had no one fitted to construct a navy, Peter resolved to accomplish this work himself.

Hence this remarkable young man at the age of twenty-five left his own country and his throne, entrusting the government to his friends while he became a common workman in the shipyards of Holland. He was known to his fellow-workmen as Peter Baas, and the little hut in which he lived is still preserved. The Dutch shipmasters of course knew who he was, and readily taught him all they could. Having completed his labors in Holland, Peter journeyed to England, the other great maritime country of the day, and worked and studied there. Afterward he traveled in other lands, swiftly culling with his keen brain the western knowledge not only of ship-building but of engineering and other arts needed for the modernizing and reconstructing of his country.









PETER'S VIOLENT REFORMS

(His Soldiers Force His Subjects to Shorten Their Beards and Coats)

From the painting by G. von Urlaub, a contemporary German artist

PETER was summoned home from his study of western Europe by a revolt of the royal guards, the ancient Strelitz, who objected to having their master live away from them outside of Russia. They planned to restore Sophia to power. Peter, hurrying to Moscow, performed an act whose savagery links him with the earlier czars. He had the entire body of the Strelitz executed, many of them by torture. Probably he realized that he could never get these sturdy conservatives to consent to the reforms he had now in mind.

By one law after another the young czar now compelled his people to accept the western civilization, whether they wished it or no. They resisted him obstinately, clinging to each ancient custom as though its change meant death. For instance, the Russians wore full beards and long robes, and despised the smooth-shaven faces and short coats of the French. Peter commanded them to adopt the French style. Instead they wore beards and robes longer than ever. Peter placed a heavy tax on beards, but they paid the tax and clung to the beards, each man's patriotism being measurable by the length of beard and cloak he could raise and pay for. Finally Peter issued a peremptory law and placed his soldiers at every gate of Moscow to enforce it. They seized each man who passed, and sheared off his beard and his long skirts to the length which the czar had prescribed. Obviously Peter had no easy task in modernizing his obstinate subjects.





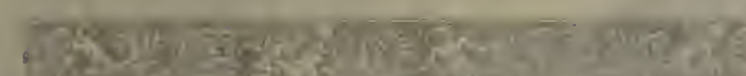


THE WOUNDING OF ST. PETERSBURG

By the Hon. Mr. J. M. Smith, Secretary of the Navy.

NEW YORK: 1855.

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The following is a copy of the report of the Secretary of the Navy, dated the 1st of March, 1855, in relation to the attack on the city of St. Petersburg, Russia, on the 1st of September, 1854. The report is a detailed account of the military operations, the state of the city, and the results of the attack. It is a valuable document for the study of military history and the defense of cities.





THE FOUNDING OF ST. PETERSBURG

(Peter Himself Plans and Directs the Building of His City)

After an old print

SO obstinate though passive was the opposition of the Russians of Moscow to Peter's extravagant changes, that he resolved to punish them by removing his capital from Moscow entirely. At the same time he planned to get into closer touch with western Europe. Moscow is a thousand miles inland; Peter resolved to build on the shores of the Baltic Sea, thus coming into contact with Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Denmark, the countries which then divided among them the Baltic territory. Really none of the Baltic coast belonged to Russia; but an arm of the sea reaching far inland touched some land to which Peter set up a claim, and on this inlet he set to work to build his city, St. Petersburg.

The construction of this remarkable city was a truly colossal work. In the first place, the climate was so cold that none but a Russian would have dreamed of living there. In the next place the land was all a low-lying marsh, which the sea overflowed at every storm. Yet again, no one but Peter himself approved the wild project, and he had little competent help. He was his own chief engineer. But the iron will of the great czar triumphed over everything. The city was built, though at enormous sacrifice of life. Dykes secured it from the waves. Huge fortresses defended it against Swede and Dane. Street after street of huge stone palaces supplied lodging for all officials; and the entire government of Russia was finally installed secure in ice-bound St. Petersburg.







1841

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MAZEPPA

(The Cossack Chief Endures Such Suffering as Leads Him to Betray Russia)

From a painting by the German artist, G. Marx

PETER'S insistence on thus entering into contact with western Europe, forced him to take part in its wars. Sweden at this time owned all the east coast of the Baltic, until it reached Polish territory to the south. Sweden was most unwilling to have Russia crowding in upon her territory with St. Petersburg; and Sweden was ruled by a celebrated warrior, Charles XII. Naturally there was war. In the first battle the Swedes beat the Russians overwhelmingly; but Peter calmly said he had expected that, and went on training and drilling his men. Charles was delayed by wars with Poland and Denmark; but he planned to conquer all Russia by means of an alliance with the Cossacks, proposed by their celebrated chieftain Mazeppa.

Mazeppa's remarkable experience in his youth has made him a favorite theme of romance. He was a page at the Polish court and one of its savage nobles having cause for vengeance against him, bound him to the back of a wild horse which fled with him across wilderness and desert, till it brought him almost dying to his native land in southern Russia. Here he rose to be the Cossack leader, and Czar Peter had loaded him with honors. Nevertheless, Mazeppa's hatred of Poland was such that, finding Charles XII was fighting against both Poles and Russians, he offered to betray Peter and join the Swedes.







LOWTOWA, PETER S GREAT BRITAIN BATTLE

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PULTOWA, PETER'S GREATEST BATTLE

(Cossack and Swede Meet in a Preliminary Skirmish)

After a painting by the German artist, Werner Schuch

THE treason which Mazeppa planned, he was unable to carry out. When he appealed to his Cossacks to follow him against Peter the Great they refused, declaring that Russia had kept all her promises to them. So Mazeppa fled almost alone to the camp of Charles of Sweden, and the Cossacks gained a repute which still clings to them, of devoted loyalty to the czar.

Meanwhile Charles, having crushed both Poland and Denmark, turned to attack Russia, expecting Cossack aid. Czar Peter knew well that this warfare was not to end, as had Charles' first attack, with a single battle. Charles meant now to conquer Russia completely. She must fight for life. Shrewdly, therefore, Peter avoided meeting the terrible Swedish troops and their terrible leader. He retreated before them, devastating his own country as he drew back, fighting the Swedes just as his descendants fought Napoleon a century later, by letting them destroy themselves in the vast Russian wilderness. The Swedes starved and froze. Finally Charles, still hoping to unite with the Cossacks, turned aside toward southern Russia. Here Mazeppa met him, and he learned that he must depend solely on himself. With his army reduced to one-fourth its size he besieged Pultowa. Cossack and Russian rode round his troops cutting off all supplies; and when the Swedes seemed most exhausted Peter attacked and crushed them with an overwhelming force.









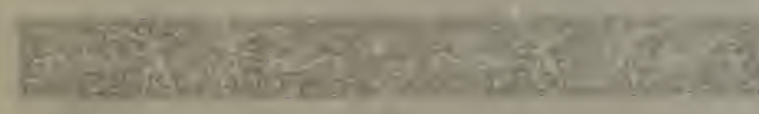
THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF THE

EMPEROR

BY THE REV. AND EMINENT DIVINE, JOHN CALVIN, D.D. OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BERN.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
THE FIRST VOLUME.
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF THE
EMPEROR AUGUSTUS, FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS REIGN
UNTIL HIS DEATH.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
THE SECOND VOLUME.
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF THE
EMPEROR TIBERIUS, FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS REIGN
UNTIL HIS DEATH.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
THE THIRD VOLUME.
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF THE
EMPEROR CALIGULA, FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS REIGN
UNTIL HIS DEATH.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
THE FOURTH VOLUME.
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF THE
EMPEROR CLEOPATRA, FROM THE BEGINNING OF HER REIGN
UNTIL HER DEATH.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

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UNTIL HER DEATH.
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PETER AND CATHARINE IN POLAND

(Peter Escorts His Peasant Empress Through the Land of Her Youth)

From a painting by the Norwegian Artist, Josef Brandt

BY his victory over Sweden, Peter gained broad territories along the Baltic, a firm foothold on the seacoast of the north. He next desired an equal sea front to the south, and so for the second time he attacked the Turks. Here, however, his military skill failed him. He was entrapped by the Turks at Jassy and must have lost his army and been himself made prisoner had not a young woman of his court saved him by her cleverness in intriguing with the Turks. Peter escaped by a treaty in which he surrendered to the Turks all the southern seacoast he had formerly won from them. So grateful was he to the woman who had saved him, that he proclaimed her the saviour of Russia, wedded her, and made her his empress. This was his notorious second wife, Catharine. The bride of his youth, Eudoxia, he had long repudiated because she and her family had persistently clung to the cause of ancient Russia and had opposed all his reforms. Catharine was a peasant girl from the Baltic coast. Originally a Polish subject she had been captured by the Russians. Her wit and ability attracted the notice of one official after another and finally of the czar himself. Now she was the Empress of Russia.

As such she immediately had Peter take her on a tour through western Europe. She went especially to Poland, which country had long been allied with Peter. There, in the land where she had once been a serf, almost a slave, she was now received with special honor and splendor.









ROYALTY SALUTES ROYALTY

(Peter Visits Louis XV, the Child King of France)

From a drawing by the French artist, Alphonse de Neuville (1836-1885)

IN the celebrated triumphal progress which Peter the Great and his new Empress made from capital to capital of western Europe, he was received with all the honor he had earned. Russia was now for the first time recognized as an important factor in European politics. Not only had she crushed Sweden, whose fiery sovereign, Charles XII, had terrified all Europe, but she had also come forward as the champion of Christianity against the Mahometan Turks; so that Peter was everywhere made particularly welcome.

France was in this century the foremost kingdom of Europe. The long and brilliant reign of Louis XIV had just reached an end, and his tiny great-grandson, Louis XV, sat upon the French throne. The Russian sovereign met the little lad as one equal meets another, and lifting him in his brawny arms before all the French court he gave the boy a resounding kiss. He drew up with his own hand a treaty of commerce with France, to which little Louis' ministers readily agreed. Then Peter returned home, returned to find little happiness, for his son and heir Alexis, Eudoxia's son, was plotting rebellion against him. Alexis was tortured to death; but Peter's last years sank into unhappiness, for he found he could no longer trust either relatives or friends, or even the peasant wife he had raised to splendor by his side.







RUSSIA ENTERS PERSIA

... Round the Ca ...



RUSSIA ENTERS PERSIA

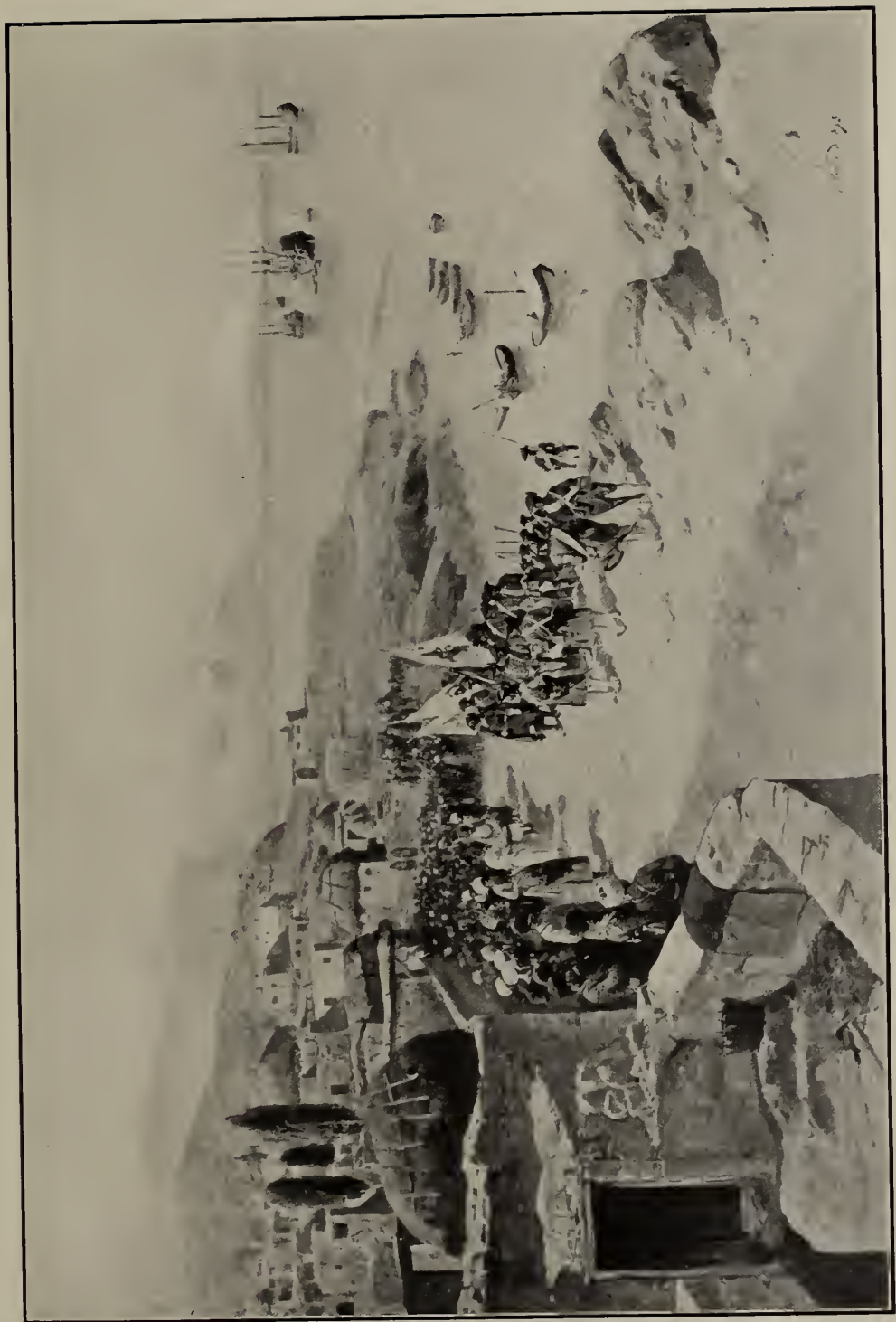
(Peter Sails Round the Caucasus and Seizes Possession of Tarki)

From a painting in 1895 by the Russian artist, Franz Roubaud

DURING Peter's later years of sorrow when the friends of his youth had died and his later associates had disappointed him, Russia accomplished yet one more notable achievement. Probably to Peter's own time the matter seemed unimportant; but we of to-day see in it the beginning of Russia's advance toward southern Asia, which has now brought her face to face with England in the contest for Persia and the Indian frontier. This event was the seizure of the town of Tarki in 1721.

Some Russians had been slain in Persia by a raid of wild Afghans. Peter demanded apologies and recompense from the Persian Shah, and as the indolent Persian gave little heed to his clamor, the czar marched with a Russian army to the shore of the Caspian Sea. Here he built some ships, making this the third sea upon which he had thus launched a navy. With these ships he sailed southward along the Caspian, and in this manner accomplished a feat which would have been almost impossible on land, that is, he passed the huge and almost impassable Caucasian Mountains which here separate Asia and Europe. Having thus reached the Persian part of the Caspian, Peter's troops landed and with but little opposition took possession of Tarki. From here they moved onward until they held and fortified a considerable strip of former Persian territory.







THE UNCERTAINTY OF GREATNESS

(Menzikoff, Chief Minister Under Three Russian Rulers, Dies With His Daughter in Siberia)

From a painting by the Russian artist, W. Szurikow

PETER THE GREAT died in 1725. There was a rumor that he had been poisoned by his peasant wife Catharine, who feared lest he discover her intrigues. Probably this was untrue; nevertheless Catharine I was a most depraved woman, and it is a grim commentary on the Russian life and manners of the time that her rule was accepted without question. She chose as her chief minister an able politician, Menzikoff. When she died shortly afterward, Menzikoff had himself made regent to a child whom he selected as czar. This was Peter II, a grandson of Peter the Great by his rebel son Alexis.

Menzikoff seemed all-powerful; but the Russian court was now ruled by treachery and intrigue, and the boy czar suddenly signed an order exiling Menzikoff to Siberia. The regent was seized and carried off before he could resist. His enemies dispatched him to the coldest Siberian spot they could find. His wife died upon the journey, and his chief attendant was his eldest daughter. In his day of power he had betrothed this daughter to the young czar; but Peter now repudiated the betrothal, and the unhappy girl was included in her father's exile. He took refuge in religion, reflecting upon the littleness of human greatness. The bitter cold, or perhaps the bitter hopelessness of it all, killed him and then killed her within two years. His two younger children were afterward allowed to return to Russia.





drew his last breath; and the eyes of him who had left Scotland as a poor, unfriended wanderer were closed by the hands of an Emperor."

Now came Peter's chance to secure an outlet on the Baltic. The King of Sweden had died in 1697, leaving the throne to his son, a boy of fifteen. He was looked upon as so insignificant and helpless that Russia, Denmark, and Poland coolly formed a league for the dismemberment of his kingdom. Never was a greater mistake made in politics. The youthful Swede was Charles XII., whose career for the dozen years that followed was one of the most dazzling in history. In the very hour that Charles learned of the intentions of his enemies, he began his preparations to defeat them. Without waiting for them to strike, he swept down like a cyclone with his army, first upon Denmark, and then upon the Polish forces at Riga, and ground both to powder.

Then like a very thunderbolt of war Charles hurled his soldiers against a Russian army of eighty thousand men, who were besieging Narva, a small town near the Gulf of Livonia, and within Swedish territory. Peter had been an assiduous student of the theory of war, but here was the whirlwind itself, and he was gaining a lesson that was to last throughout his life, abounding as it did with eager education. It was in the latter part of November that the Swedes loomed out of a driving snow storm and fell upon the terrified Russians. It mattered not that the Swedes were but as one to seven or eight against their enemies; they drove everything resistlessly before them. The defeat of the Russians could not have been more complete and ignominious. The long petticoats prevented celerity of movement, and when the panic-stricken wretches started to run, the nimbler Swedes cut them down like sheep. After the battle it was found that the prisoners were four times as many as their conquerors.

Fortunately for Peter he was not at this battle. When news of the disaster reached him, he did not seem to be disheartened, only remarking: "I expected the Swedes to beat us; we needed the lesson, and before long they will teach us how to beat them." There was much force in what he said some time afterward: "If we had gained a victory at Narva, knowing so little as we did about the science of war, who shall say into what abyss the unexpected good fortune would have thrown us? It may seem a costly lesson, but in the end it shall cost the Swedes far more than us."

Always and forever busy, Peter not only in time of peace prepared for war, but reversed the rule and in time of war made ready for the coming of peace. He imported sheep from Saxony, built linen and paper factories, founded schools and hospitals, and melted the church bells in Moscow into cannon. Most rulers would have accepted Narva as so overwhelming a disaster that they would have waited a long time before measuring strength again with the

foe that had crushed them. But nothing was further from the thoughts of Peter than delay. The severity of the winter made it necessary to await the coming of spring, but when that arrived he would be ready!

And now comes the touch of romance to "grim-visaged" war. The Russian troops were on the march as soon as weather permitted, and gained a few unimportant successes. One of the Russian generals captured Marienburg in Livonia, where he found among the prisoners a beautiful young Livonian girl, of the name of Martha. She had been married the day before to a Swedish sergeant, who fell in the battle. Thus she was left a friendless orphan at the age of sixteen, not knowing where to turn in her grief. Her sorrowful plight attracted the notice of General Bauer, who befriended her. She afterward lived with Menzikoff, but caught the eye of the Czar, who took her to himself and first privately and then publicly married her. This poor Livonian girl in time became the Empress of all the Russias.

There are no more superstitious people anywhere than the Russians. Peter had chafed for a long time against the ecclesiastical power, which was the only real check upon his own. He was waiting for the right hour to put axe to the root of the tree, for he was determined it should fall. The Patriarch, at the head of the Church, was spiritually miles above the head of the Emperor. On Palm Sunday he rode to church upon an ass, at the head of a long procession of priests and civil dignitaries, with the Czar walking uncovered beside him and holding the bridle of the beast. The Patriarch had the power of pronouncing the sentence of torture, and of life or death, and there was no tribunal to which appeal could be taken against the sentence.

All this was unbearable to Peter. He saw in the Church the unrelenting enemy to the reforms he contemplated, for there was no shattering the wall of bigotry or placating the opposition. He therefore determined to take the only effective remedy that was possible; he would abolish the office of Patriarch and place himself at the head of the Church. When the Patriarch died, Peter made himself *pontifex maximus*, and refused to appoint any other Patriarch. The clergy offered less resistance than would have been expected. It may have been that they saw the uselessness of such resistance and were too wise to stir the wrath of such a terrific personality, while some indeed defended his high-handed course.

Before the year 1702 drew to a close, Peter's troops had driven the Swedes from the Ladoga and the Neva, and had occupied all the ports in Carelia and Ingria. Then, keeping up his policy of preparing for peace and developing his country in time of war, the Czar founded the metropolis of his empire, St. Petersburg, so named not in honor of Peter, but of his patron saint and name-father, the Apostle Peter. The foundations were laid May 27, 1703.

No other man could have caused a magnificent city to rise in that unfavorable spot. The site is upon a delta formed by the branching of the Neva, on a dismal morass, without stones, half-submerged, with no clay or earth that could be utilized, with the Gulf of Finland in front and the outlet of Lake Ladoga and the surrounding swamps at the rear. The soil was sterile, the climate of Arctic intensity, and a southwest wind of two days' continuance deluged the city with the waters of the Baltic. One hundred thousand workmen succumbed during the first year to the cold and unhealthfulness of the location, but at the end of that same year St. Petersburg contained thirty thousand houses. Attractive inducements brought immigrants, and in a few years the city became the Russian commercial depot of the Baltic. It was in itself a throb of the will of one of the mightiest and most resistless of earthly rulers.

Meanwhile the war raged. While the Czar was building his proud city, Charles XII. was striking his sledge-hammer blows which tumbled the Elector of Saxony off the Polish throne. Charles desolated both Poland and Saxony. Peter's troops had learned fast from their teachers, and steadily gained province after province of what at that time was Swedish sea coast. After a number of important successes, the Czar joined forces with Augustus in Poland, but about the same time he was called off to quell a rebellion in Astrakan. Hardly was he gone when the perfidious Augustus galloped off to make a humiliating treaty with the Swedish king. Not only that, but he surrendered one of the most faithful of the Czar's generals to Charles, who in his rage caused the man to be broken on the wheel. Peter thought he had gained nearly all the Swedish provinces he cared about at that time, and notified Charles that he was ready to discuss terms of peace.

"I am willing to do so," replied the Swedish monarch, "but it must be in Moscow."

"Brother Charles wishes to act Alexander," grimly remarked Peter; "but he shall not find a Darius in me."

Peter now displayed good generalship by slowly retreating before the advance of his fiery tempered foe, and seeking to make the climate his ally, as his countrymen did a hundred years and more later, before the invasion of Napoleon. His Cossacks laid waste the country on all sides of the advancing Swedes, whose iron-willed leader could not be persuaded from his course, and with his eighty thousand troops followed the hundred thousand of Peter, who kept open communications with his cities and magazines. Several collisions took place without decisive results. The bitterly cold weather froze thousands of the poor soldiers, who toppled over like so many tenpins and were left lying like blocks of ice in the snow. Still the relentless Charles pushed forward, when, to the inexplicable amazement of the Czar, he suddenly turned aside,

abandoned his campaign against Moscow, and marched toward the Ukraine. What could it mean?

This was the explanation: Mazeppa was a hetman or general of the Cossacks, who, when a youth, served as a page to the King of Poland. A nobleman of that country caused him to be stripped naked and bound upon a horse. The horse was sent galloping off to go whither he chose. Instead of taking the captive to the Ukraine, as the poet Byron tells the story, the horse carried his senseless master to his distant home. The shamed and humiliated Mazeppa fled to the Ukraine and joined the Cossacks, where his courage and ability caused his choice as hetman. He became a favorite of Peter, who heaped honors upon him and made him Prince of the Ukraine. When the freedom of the Cossacks was lessened, Mazeppa formed a plot for throwing off the sovereignty of the Czar, and, at the period which we have reached, he was negotiating with Charles with a view of gaining his help. He promised to take over the Cossacks to Charles' side; but they refused to unite in his treason, and when Mazeppa joined the Swedish King, he led only an insignificant number of companions. It was the turning aside of Charles to effect a junction of forces with the Cossack leader that caused the singular change in his plan of campaign.

Although it was the depth of winter and the Swedish soldiers were perishing by the thousand, Charles could not be persuaded to go into winter quarters, but pressed on, determined to reduce the Ukraine and then capture Moscow. In the month of May, 1709, with only eighteen thousand left of his original eighty thousand troops, he laid siege to Pultowa. A month later Peter came up, and, under the pretence of an attack upon the Swedes, rushed two thousand of his soldiers into the place. A few days afterward he gave battle to his adversary and utterly routed him. Both leaders fought in front of their armies with conspicuous bravery. Charles was suffering from a wound in the heel, and was borne throughout the fight on a litter. When his army was annihilated, he made his escape on horseback and fled to Turkey. Only a few of his followers accompanied him, and Mazeppa, who was one of them, died the same year.

The overthrow of Charles was complete, and during the following autumn and winter Livonia was annexed to Russia. Charles, however, was one of those magnificent heathen who was born six hundred years too late. He fought for the mere sake of fighting. To him war was the normal condition of society, and peace was as unbearable as it was unnatural. Instead of accepting what seemed to be the inevitable, he threw all his diplomacy and skill into persuading the Turks to make war against Peter, whom he hated unutterably, for having "clipped the wings" of his ambition. So skilfully was the jealousy

of the Sultan stirred over the aggressions of Russia that he decided to enter into a campaign against the Czar, his avowed object being the recovery of Azov and the expulsion of his pestilent neighbors from the Black Sea.

Peter saw the momentous nature of the impending struggle, made a levy of one man out of every four in his dominions, and, at the head of forty thousand troops, crossed the frontier of Turkey. Before setting out, he made public proclamation of his previous marriage with Catharine or Martha, the "captive of Marienburg," and she, despite his remonstrances, accompanied him on the most trying campaign of his life.

Strange as it may seem, Peter now committed the same blunder that had undone Charles of Sweden. Believing in the pledges that were brought to him of the assistance of the Hospodar of Moldavia, he advanced at the head of a weak force,—so weak, indeed, that without the promised aid of the Moldavians it was doomed to failure. That indispensable aid was never given. Crossing the deep, rapid Pruth, Peter found himself near Jassy, in a hostile country, with the swift river between him and his own dominions, and with a powerful army of Turks in front and another of Tartars in his rear. His enemies numbered two hundred thousand to his forty thousand, and had every advantage of position. It looked as if the Czar had walked blindfolded into the very trap set for him.

Fighting went on for three days, during which Peter lost nearly half his men, and then the last glimmer of hope vanished. Not a single Moldavian had come to his assistance, and he knew that none would come. The river under the circumstances was impassable. He was like the worm enclosed in a ring of fire, which has no choice but to wait its final consuming.

Who shall describe the despairing thoughts of the great Peter? Charles, whom he had crushed like a serpent under his heel, had brought another to secure his ruin. That execrated leader of the Swedes would be among the jeering multitude who would feast their exultation upon the sight of the Czar of Russia paraded through the streets of Constantinople as the captive of the Sultan. What an ignominious ending to a career that was meant to be one of a towering grandeur such as the modern world had not yet seen! What a fall for the vaulting ambition, when advancing swiftly toward its fullest fruition! What depths of woe and disappointment the human heart can suffer without breaking, and how many thousand times worse than death such a doom was to one with Peter's aims, hopes, and ambition!

Wrapping his cloak about his massive shoulders, with head bowed and with such a distorted, frightful mien that all shrank from his path and none durst speak to him, the Czar strode into his tent and flung himself upon his blanket, first calling out that no one should come near him. Then were heard strange

sounds, such as might be made by a wild beast or monster, rolling over the ground and fighting with a convulsion that was tearing body, brain, and soul. Peter was in one of his tumults of fury.

Yet legend says that a woman dared to disobey him and intrude upon his despair. It was his peasant wife, Catherine. She told her husband that she, as well as he, saw that retreat was as impossible as escape from the enemies who shut them in on every hand. Only one recourse remained to be tried. That was negotiation.

"It has not been attempted," said she, "because no one has thought of it; it is the only means left to us; if it fails, we shall be no worse off but I am sure it will succeed."

It was tried and succeeded beyond the hopes even of Catherine. She tore off her jewels, made all who could contribute do so, and, loading down a representative with the treasures, he was sent into the camp of the enemy, bearing all as a present to the Grand Vizier. The latter was so pleased by the bribe that he ordered hostilities to be suspended at once, and accepted the proposals the Czar made to him. These included the surrender of Azov, the shutting out of Russia from the Black Sea, the demolition of the fortress at Taganroc, the withdrawal of all Russian troops from the vicinity of the Danube, and the guarantee of a safe passage for Charles XII. through the Czar's dominions to his own country. It seems singular that the Vizier thus threw away the capture of the Czar, who was within his power, and when the Turk could have obtained by force of arms all and more than all that was granted by Peter in his extremity.

As for the Swedish King, his rage over what he considered his betrayal was like that of Peter when he lay foaming and writhing in his tent. He berated and insulted the Vizier to his face, as if the Turk were a vassal instead of his patron and master. His furious scolding and protests were contemptuously received, and for three years longer Charles lived as a dependent upon Turkish bounty, scorning all the entreaties of his own countrymen to return and attend to the duties of his kingship. He still hoped he could persuade the Turks to join him in a campaign against Moscow. Finally, after a ridiculous resistance with a few of his servants, he was expelled from the country, and reached home in the disguise of a courier in November, 1714, and was joyfully received by his countrymen. He died soon after.

As for Peter, he hurried home, gained an important victory over the Swedes on the Baltic, commanding his fleet in person, in a battleship that he himself had built. St. Petersburg gave him a welcome like that which Rome in its days of glory gave to her returning conquerors. He transferred the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg, founded the Academy of Arts and Sciences

and the public library, sent a mission through Siberia and China, and had a map prepared of his own dominions, much of which was his own handiwork.

In 1716 Peter set out on a second tour of Europe, accompanied by Catharine, to whom he always showed the deepest gratitude for her measureless help. His first visit was to Poland; then with peculiar pleasure he visited Saardam, where his great fame had preceded him, and he was received with enthusiam. In France he met little Louis XV. and delighted the boy king by lifting him in his herculean arms. It is recorded that at the tomb of Cardinal Richelieu the Czar sank on his knees and exclaimed: "Gladly would I give thee half of my dominions for thy wisdom to teach me how to govern the other half."

After personally drawing up a treaty of commerce with France, he returned home by way of Berlin. He was vexed by the clamor of some of his clergy for the appointment of a Patriarch, and showed his contempt by conferring the dignity upon a senile buffoon more than four score years of age. No more grotesque exhibition can be imagined, and the people were glad to cease importuning the Czar further regarding their Church dignity.

We are now approaching the most dreadful tragedy in the life of this remarkable ruler,—that is, the condemnation and execution of his own son, Alexis. There have been some who have tried to find palliation for the diabolical act, but it is too shocking for human nature to regard with any feelings except those of shuddering horror. Alexis was bitterly opposed to the system of reforms to which his father devoted his energies and life, and he was anything but a dutiful son and high-minded youth; but for much of this the parent himself was blamable, since he placed the boy's education in the hands of those whose reactionary creed he well knew, and who were certain to instil it into the plastic mind of the son. As Motley says:

"It was hardly to be expected, to be sure, that this tremendous despot, who had recoiled before no obstacle in the path of his settled purposes; who had stridden over everything with the step of a giant; who had given two seas to an inland empire; who had conquered the most warlike nation and sovereign of Europe with barbarians in petticoats; who had crushed the nobility, annihilated the Janizaries, trampled the Patriarch in dust; who had repudiated his wife because she was attached to the old customs of Muscovy, and had married and crowned a pastry-cook's mistress because it was his sovereign will and pleasure—it was hardly to be expected that such a man would hesitate about disinheriting his own son if he thought proper to do so. But it might have been hoped that he would content himself with disinheriting him, and that the '*Pater Patriæ*,' as by a solemn decree he was shortly afterward entitled, would remember that he was also father of Alexis."

Alexis, it is true, was everything that a son ought not to be. He was stupid, a liar, a sot, a profligate, and the treacherous foe of the magnificent and far-reaching reforms which his august parent had set on foot. Had he been less a dolt, he would have foreseen the inevitable consequence of his conduct. There was no law in Russia which made the eldest son of the sovereign his successor. The crown was the personal property of the Czar, as much as were his horses, cattle, and jewels, and he had an unquestioned right to will it to whomsoever he chose. Alexis was unfit to rule, and long before the fearful crisis came he had disinherited himself.

The sombre, ever-present shadow that darkened the life of the Czar was the dread that with his death the grand fabric which he had built up with such infinite pains would crumble into ruin, because of the bigoted priests and reactionists of whom Alexis was the tool. So, as has been shown, Peter would have done only a praiseworthy act in excluding his son from the succession and choosing some one, no matter what his birth, to carry on the stupendous work that, although well advanced, had not yet reached its full completion.

Alexis was married, and his brutality had much to do with hastening the death of his unhappy wife. The Czar angrily remonstrated with him, and gave him to understand that unless he reformed he would not receive the throne. "If you prefer your present course, become a monk."

"With your gracious permission I will do so," was the reply of the son, who meant the declaration to veil his real intentions. Peter gave him six months in which to think over the matter, and then set out on his tour through Germany and France. Hardly was the Czar's back turned upon St. Petersburg when Alexis sprang from a bed of pretended sickness, and, calling his abandoned companions around him, he became uproariously drunk, and loudly expressed the hope that his father would never return to Russia. In the course of a few months, he received a letter from the Czar ordering him to join the royal court at Copenhagen, provided he had determined to reform his life and make himself fit for the succession. If not, he must take his monastic vows without further delay.

Alexis read the decisive message, declared he was going to Copenhagen, and drew a large amount for his travelling expenses. Still proclaiming that he was on his way to Copenhagen, he left the capital and then sneaked aside to Vienna. The Emperor of Germany gave him so cold a reception that he turned off to Naples. Here two envoys of the Czar found him and placed in his hands a truly paternal letter from his father, affectionate, kind, and promising that if he were obedient his parent would not punish him, but forgive everything and "love him more than ever." Nevertheless the Czar could be stern even when his heart was stirred, and he solemnly warned the degenerate

youth that if he persisted in his evil courses, Peter would eternally curse him and find the means of punishing his ingratitude as it deserved.

Alexis seemed at last to see the true situation, and to understand that he must decide at once what he would do. He went back with the two messengers to Moscow, where he arrived in February, 1718. Peter now showed that he could violate his pledged word in true kingly fashion, for on the day following his son's arrival he called a council of the senate and dignitaries of the empire, and formally disinherited Alexis, compelling him and all who were present to swear allegiance to his infant son, who, however, died soon afterward.

The beast in the nature of Peter now clawed its way into dominance. Not content with disinheriting Alexis, he determined to be forever rid of him, foreseeing a strife for the succession, a strife in which the depraved youth might succeed and overturn the splendid structure that had been reared with so much labor and cost. The only way of lifting this shadow of danger was through the death of Alexis, and the father determined to resort to that horrible method.

When the wolf selected the lamb for his victim, he appealed to twisted logic to justify the act. So Peter hunted up excuses, none of which is entitled to a feather's weight. He formally accused Alexis of conspiring against his life. Such an autocrat could have no difficulty in securing the kind of evidence he needed. When his confessor, mistresses, and sottish companions were put upon the rack, they said just what the Czar wished them to say, and were rewarded by being released from torture. As has been remarked, there is no court in Christendom where the testimony that was brought forward would not have been flung into the street.

But the "evidence" was in and a trial was instituted. The miserable victim in his terror confessed to the most impossible offenses; and feeling that he had the worm impaled upon the pin, the Czar resorted to the subterfuge of submitting the case to the judgment of the clergy and highest state officials. The clergy recommended mercy. Fearing this effect upon the other court, more incriminating evidence was hurriedly scraped together, with the result that the ministers, senators, and generals, rightly reading the horrible resolution of the Czar, unanimously condemned the prince to death, leaving the method to be determined by his father.

Thus the appalling issue was forced upon the parent. Absolute master of the situation, he could afford to be deliberate, and soon it was given out that while considering the matter, Alexis became so terrified by his impending fate that he was carried off by an apoplectic seizure, and died, July 7, repentant, receiving the sacrament and extreme unction, and praying his father's pardon.

As generations have passed the majority have come to accept this statement as the true account of the taking off of the wretched Alexis. Yet even if we reject the darker statement that Alexis died under torture, it remains evident that his father scared him to death. Had he not passed away as he did, can any one doubt that Peter would have carried out the verdict of the court? If any human being ever murdered another, then Peter the Great murdered his son Alexis. That fact may be set down as being as undoubted as the shining of the sun in the heavens at midday.

History tells of a remarkable intrigue set on foot in Europe by which Charles XII. of Sweden was to be reconciled with Peter, and they were to unite against George I. of England in the attempt to give the throne of that country to the Pretender. But death removed Charles, and the Czar had held himself so aloof from public participation in the intrigue that he had the effrontery to repeat his pledges of eternal friendship to the house of Hanover, and to assure the English monarch of the "continued assurances of his distinguished consideration."

Panting and exhausted Sweden was glad to sign the treaty of Neustadt, September 10, 1721, by which the Czar was guaranteed in the possession of Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria (afterward the government of St. Petersburg), Viborg and Kexholm, and a small part of Finland, including all the islands along the coast from Courland to Viborg, Sweden being given back the remainder of Finland and the sum of \$2,000,000. It was at this time that Peter received from the senate and synod the titles of Great, Emperor, and *Pater Patriæ* (Father of his country).

The two years of peace that followed were devoted by the Czar, as was his custom, to the development of the resources of his empire. St. Petersburg, his favorite city, was beautified, and he established manufactories of glass, woollens, and paper, and greatly improved the internal and foreign commerce of his empire. Amid all these activities of peace Peter kept peering beyond his own borders for opportunities of extending his dominions. A sovereign inspired by such an ambition has little trouble in finding pretexts for despoiling his weaker neighbors. The indolent ruler of Persia was hard pushed by a vigorous Afghan prince. The destruction of a handful of Russians, engaged in commerce at the town of Shamakia during the fighting, gave Peter his pretext for invading the Shah's dominions and demanding satisfaction from both parties. Since they were unable to give it, he took it himself.

In 1721 he led an army to the Caspian Sea, and sailed along its shores to the Persian city of Tarki, where he landed and pushed inland some distance with his troops. All the Caspian shore as far as Baku was taken possession

of, and fortifications were built at both Tarki and Baku. This was the beginning of Russian conquest in Asia.

This achievement completed the acquisitions of Peter the Great. He who found the first expression of his passion for maritime affairs in paddling a tiny skiff on the Yausa was now master of two seas, with a fine navy built mostly by his own hand. Returning to St. Petersburg from his invasion of Persia, he ordered the little skiff, which he had used many years before, to be brought from Moscow, and, in a striking entertainment given to his court, he consecrated the "*Little Grandsire*."

When the Czar and Catharine made their tour of Europe in 1715, the couple were described in no flattering words by the Margravine of Bayreuth, at Berlin. Peter was pictured as dressed in naval costume, with a certain rugged beauty, but rude, uncouth, and of dreadful aspect. As for Catharine, she was fat, frowsy, and vulgar, needing only to be seen to betray her obscure origin. She was bedizened with chains, orders, and holy relics, "making such a *geklinkklank* as if an ass with bells were coming along." The two were represented as intolerable beggars, plundering the palace of everything they could lay their hands on.

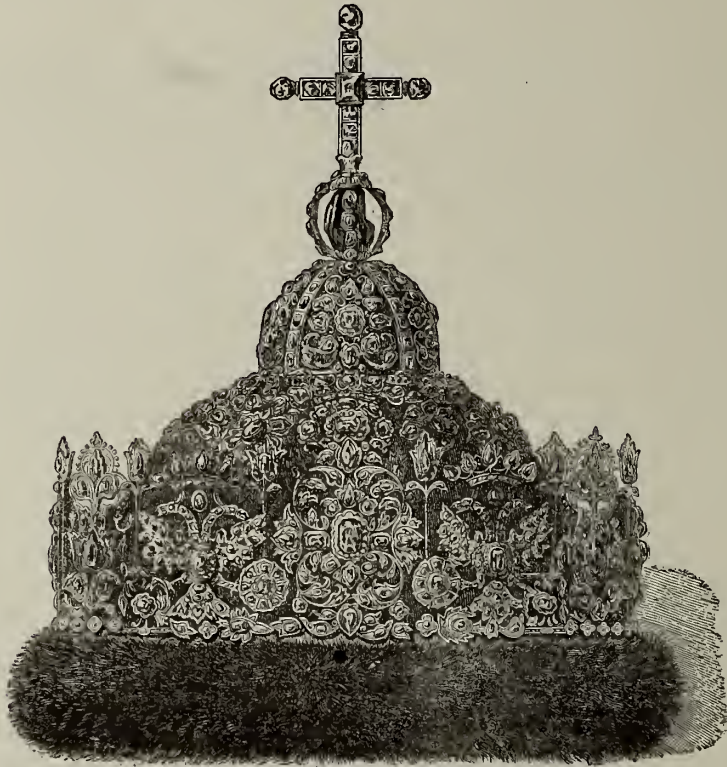
The repellant appearance of Catharine increased with her years, and despite the flattering essays of the court artists, she could not be made to look beautiful or even attractive. But Peter was never forgetful of the services she had rendered him and Russia. She was crowned as Empress-Consort with imposing pomp and ceremonies, and in the Emperor's proclamation he laid great stress upon her action at Pruth, which he declared saved himself and his army. It can hardly be doubted that Peter meant this crowning of Catharine during his lifetime to serve as proof of his intention that she should be his successor. She had borne him eight children, but all had died in childhood except two daughters, Anne and Elizabeth, the latter of whom we shall find became Empress of Russia, while the former married the Duke of Holstein and was the mother of the Emperor Peter III.

Peter had passed the half-century milestone and was beginning to feel the results of his furious indulgences, his wild passions, and his herculean exertions. One day, while sailing in the Gulf of Finland, he saw a boat that had run upon a rock, and thereby placed the sailors in great peril. He hastened out to them with his yacht, and in his efforts to save the men, labored for several hours, standing in the icy water until his whole system was chilled through. He was soon seized with an acute inflammation of the intestines and suffered so intensely that he was unable to make any clear disposition as to the succession. When his sufferings abated, he died calmly on the 28th of January, 1725, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. It was afterward charged

that his death was due to poison, but there seems not the slightest ground for the charge.

The character of Peter the Great has been well summed up by Voltaire: "He gave a polish to his people, and was himself a savage; he taught them the art of war, of which he himself was ignorant; from the sight of a small boat on the river Moskwa he created a powerful fleet; he made himself an expert and active shipwright, sailor, pilot, and commander; he changed the manners, customs, and laws of the Russians, and lives in memory as the 'Father of his Country.'"

This man had performed a Titanic work, for he was the real founder of Russia and his personality tinged the succeeding generations. But vast and far-reaching as were his achievements, they were carried through in the face of an opposition whose intensity of bitterness often scorched his very soul. That, in the face of all this, he succeeded, is the most impressive possible proof of the greatness of his genius.



JEWELLED CAP OF THE EARLY CZARS



PETER III MEETING HIS BRIDE

Chapter CXXIII

THE DWARFS THAT FOLLOWED THE GIANT

WHEN Peter the Great was compelled to yield to one mightier than he, he left his court broken into two determined factions,—those who opposed and those who favored the reforms which he had instituted. The former or reactionary party wished to raise Peter, the boy son of the executed Alexis, to the throne; the party of progress favored Catharine, the widow of the late Czar.

Menzikoff, though once a great favorite of Peter, was in disgrace at the time of his death, but he was always devoted to the interests of Catharine and he now threw his energies on her side. To help in this purpose, the death of the Czar was kept secret as long as possible, while the plotters were working night and day.

When the death of Peter could be concealed no longer, the Archbishop of Pleskow came forward and told the army and people that the late Czar on his death-bed had made solemn declaration that Catharine was the only one worthy to succeed him, and it was his fervent wish that she should be chosen. Since there can be no doubt that such was the real desire of Peter, let us try to believe—though it is hard to do so—that the Archbishop told the whole truth.

Be that as it may, Catharine, because she was the widow of the great Czar, was liked by the army and people; but if elevated, she would be the first woman to occupy the throne, and a good many frowned upon the prospect of having a female to follow the greatest ruler in their history. The declaration of the prelate, however, overcame the opposition of the nobles, and her elec-

tion was secured with comparatively little difficulty. Catharine was simple and illiterate, but had proven bright and lively, and of sufficient wit to trip abreast of her Colossus of a husband, and to keep pace with his gigantic stride, without letting the effort be apparent. She reigned for two years, during which the chief authority fell into the hands of Menzikoff. Her brief rule contains only two events worthy of reference.

The Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, planned by Peter in 1724, was established a year later by Catharine and liberally supported by her. It attained great eminence under Catharine II. Vitus Behring, a Dane, was sent on an expedition of discovery in the sea of Kamtchatka. He followed the coast northward until he believed from the trend of the land he had reached the northeast point of Asia. It is now believed, however, that the point which he rounded was to the south of the real East Cape, and that he did not explore the entire strait which bears his name. After spending several years in explorations around Behring Sea and on the coasts of Kamtchatka, Okhotsk, and the north of Siberia, he sailed from Okhotsk toward the American continent, and coasted for a considerable distance northward. He was driven back by sickness and storms, and being wrecked on the desert waste, since called Behring's Island, he died there in December, 1741. A year before his death he founded the present settlement of Petropolovski.

The Empress was in poor health and allowed the Government to be carried on by the Upper Secret Council. She died in May, 1727, not yet forty years of age, her death being due mainly to drunkenness. Of her children, all passed away in youth except Elizabeth, who afterward reached the throne. Being permitted to name her successor, she chose the youthful Peter, son of Alexis. If Peter died without children, her daughters, Elizabeth and Anne, were to succeed him. Anne died in 1728, shortly after her marriage with the Duke of Holstein. She was the mother of Peter III.

Menzikoff was made the guardian of the young Czar during his minority, and was the leader in the council which conducted the Government. His dominance over the late Empress was shown by her order that his daughter should be betrothed to Peter. It is easy to believe that the whole document was concocted by Menzikoff himself. He was as supreme as Peter the Great had ever been, and was held in dread by those who penetrated his ambitious and unscrupulous character. With his daughter affianced to the young Czar (though there was mutual dislike between the two), Menzikoff compelled the Princess Anne and her husband to retire to their estates. Who could be more secure in his exalted station than Menzikoff in 1727? No man dared openly to oppose him, all submitted meekly, praying that the hour of their relief would soon come.

Incredible as it would seem, the power of Menzikoff was overturned by a little boy. This child was a playfellow of the youthful ruler and belonged to the powerful family of Dolgorouki. Urged by his friends, he made clear to the sovereign the humiliating position in which he was held by the ambitious Menzikoff. In truth poor Peter was nothing but a dependent creature, as subject to the man's whim as if he were the child of a peasant. All the passionate nature of the young Czar was roused, his dislike of the girl to whom he was betrothed doubtless intensifying his hatred of the father, and exactly four months after Menzikoff had produced the alleged will of the dead Empress at the council of ministers, Peter signed the ukase which sent the former favorite to Siberia. When he went, he was accompanied by his family and a retinue of servants in fine carriages, each drawn by six horses, and amid the gaping wonder of the crowds on the streets, with none of whom he had ever been popular. While on the road, a courier overtook the party with orders to bring back the ring of betrothal from his daughter. The exiles were sent to Berezov, one of the most dismal spots in the most dismal of lands, the members of the desolate company being taken part of the way in carts and part in sledges. The wife of Menzikoff died of grief on the woful journey, and Menzikoff himself, after becoming very religious, passed away in November, 1729. The eldest daughter also died, and the young Czar ordered the two remaining children to be released, and returned some of their property to them.

The reign of this capricious boy lasted four years and was a misfortune to Russia. He was under the control of the reactionaries, and at their instigation removed the seat of government to Moscow. During his rule the three Caspian provinces, Asterabad, Ghilan, and Manzaderan, which had been seized by Peter the Great, were recovered by Persia. At the beginning of 1730 Peter was attacked with smallpox, but was in a fair way toward recovery when he exposed himself to the severe cold, and died January 30.

The Council of the Empire came together to decide the succession. You will recall that Catharine had nominated in default of Peter II. her eldest surviving daughter Anne, who had married the Duke of Holstein and had died in 1728, leaving a son, who afterward became Peter III. This will was set aside. Two daughters of Ivan, the invalid elder brother of Peter the Great, were living: Anne, the widowed Duchess of Courland, and Catharine, Duchess of Mecklenburg. After much discussion, the Council bestowed the crown upon Anne, the Duchess of Courland, but with the condition that the imperial authority should be limited. She agreed, but did not hesitate to break her pledge.

The elevation of Anne was mainly due to the intrigues of Chancellor Oster-

mann, who had had charge of her education, but to his chagrin he found her ungrateful and intractable. For three years, however, her reign was mild, humane, and just. The army was reformed, more liberty was allowed to the landed gentry, the public finances were improved, and the taxes of the serfs lessened. All perhaps would have gone well but for Anne's infatuation for a ferocious wretch who acquired complete mastery over her.

This man was Ernest John de Biron, born in 1687. He studied at Königsberg and visited Moscow in 1714, where he was much admired because of his handsome person and cultivated mind. It was there Anne met him and succumbed to his blandishments. When she ascended the throne Biron went to court and was loaded with honors. Through his royal mistress he ruled Russia. He was proud, despotic, cruel, and avaricious, hating with intensity all who stood in the way of gratifying his merciless whims. More than once, the Empress was so horrified by his bloodthirsty doings that she flung herself at his feet and prayed him to desist, but he spurned her and played the bloodhound to the last. More than a thousand persons were executed by his orders, and a much greater number sent into banishment. His career was another of the many which makes one wonder how it was that rational human beings submitted, and why he was permitted so long to scourge the earth.

During the reign of Anne, a quarrel with France arose over the succession to the throne of Poland. Each nation had a candidate of its own, and when the Russians besieged the French aspirant in Dantzic, Louis XV. forgot his friendship for the family of Peter the Great and sent a French army under his ambassador Plelo, to relieve the city. Plelo was slain and the French defeated (1733). It was the first clash between France and Russia, soon smoothed over, but not easily forgotten.

The Empress on her death-bed (October, 1740) appointed Biron guardian and regent during the minority of her presumptive heir, Prince Ivan. Assuming the regency, he showed moderation and prudence, but the embers of hate were smouldering and the following month he was arrested by the orders of Field Marshal Munnich, tried, and condemned to death. This sentence was afterward commuted to imprisonment for life, and the confiscation of his property. He and his family were conveyed to the farthest depths of Siberia; but when Elizabeth came to the throne a year later, she gave Biron an easier exile and sent Munnich to take his place. At one of the stations the two sledges met. Biron and Munnich looked fixedly at each other, but neither spoke a word. The scene was a striking illustration of the possibilities under a despotic Government. Biron in his old age received a complete pardon and was allowed to return to his Duchy of Courland.

You must remember that Elizabeth, daughter of Peter I., was living at

this time, she having been born in 1709. She offered no opposition when, in 1730, Anne, Duchess of Courland, assumed the throne, seemingly being wholly abandoned to debauchery. When Anne died in 1740, and Ivan, the son of her niece, an infant only two months old, was declared Emperor, Elizabeth was roused to action, and a plot was formed to place her on the throne. Its two principal agents were Lestocq, a surgeon, and the Marquis de la Chetardie, the French ambassador. It was not hard to win over the officers of the army, and on the night of December 5, 1741, the little Emperor's mother and her husband were taken into custody. The first intention of Elizabeth was to send the dethroned Emperor and his parents to their home in Germany, but fear that the young prince might become a troublesome claimant to the throne led her to change her plans. The family were stopped at Riga and taken to the fortress of Dunamunde, kept there a year, and afterward brought to Ranenburg in the government of Riazan. Here the mother was separated from her child, and sent with her husband to a small town in the north of Russia, where she died in 1746, while the husband, a worthless man, drank and loafed for thirty years more before he passed away. The young Prince Ivan remained in confinement for years and then made himself heard of again.

Elizabeth lacked energy, knowledge, and love of public duty. She was extremely strict in observing the public ordinances of religion. Like many a person before and since occupying exalted station, she made a great pretence of piety, and possibly persuaded herself that her obedience to the forms of religion answered for a submission to its spirit. Yet she was as degraded a creature as ever sat upon a throne. Had she not been the daughter of Peter I., she would have lived out her career where she belonged, among the miserable outcasts of the streets. In order to strengthen her position, she took every care to win over her nephew, the youthful Peter, son of her sister, the Duchess of Holstein. She had him brought to St. Petersburg in 1742 and proclaimed him her successor.

You may remember that Elizabeth took part in the war for the Austrian Succession, and despite the protests of France sent an army of 37,000 men to the help of Maria Theresa, thus hurrying the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. But she could never forgive Frederick II., because of some plain truths about her to which he had given expression. When the Seven Years' War broke out in 1756, she allied herself with Austria and France, and her troops advanced into the Prussian states. They gained several victories and occupied Berlin, but without decisive result. The greatest good fortune that ever befell the remarkable Frederick the Great was when his mortal enemy, the Empress Elizabeth, died and was succeeded by his boundless admirer, Peter III.

Peter, the son of the eldest daughter of Peter the Great, was thirty-four

years old when called to the throne of Russia. In 1744 he married the Princess Sophia, of Anhalterbst, who upon entering the Greek Church (a necessary condition of marriage of a foreigner with the Czar present or presumptive) took the name of Catharine and became one of the most famous sovereigns of her adopted country. Peter was a coarse, gross man, a glutton and heavy drinker, and with little ability for government. The two were ill-matched. Catharine despised her husband, who was so much below her in capacity, while he was unable to appreciate her genius. They quarrelled continually, and many a time he struck her.

As has been stated, Peter was a profound admirer of Frederick the Great, and almost the first thing he did after coming to the throne was to withdraw from the league of France, Austria, and Russia against Prussia, to restore to Frederick the provinces of Prussia proper which had been conquered during the Seven Years' War, and to send to his aid a force of 15,000 men. This capricious facing about was due wholly to the admiration of Peter for the remarkable monarch. What a curious shift for an army to whirl around and begin fighting those who had been their allies for years! But, after all, the conduct of Peter was much more sensible than that of Elizabeth, who had nothing to satisfy but the gratification of personal pique by going into the war, which was a steady and heavy drain upon the resources of Russia. Frederick the Great said that Peter's action ended the coalition of the "three petticoats,"—Empress Elizabeth, Empress Maria Theresa, and the Marquise de Pompadour.

A kindly act was done by Peter when he recalled a number of distinguished exiles from Siberia. Among these was Lestocq, leader in the movement which placed Elizabeth on the throne, but who through some means incurred her ill-will. He had been fourteen years in that dismal region, and was seventy-four years old, but all his friends were astonished to see his eye as bright as ever and his step as elastic as in his youth. Field Marshal Munnich had spent more than twenty years in Siberia, and when he came back was followed by Biron, of whom you have already learned. It must have made a strange picture when the two appeared together in the evening at court and chatted with great politeness, both seemingly forgetful of their disastrous animosity. The two sons of the Duke of Courland were made major-generals, and the Count of Munnich was appointed first field marshal. Munnich at this time was seventy-nine years old and died in his eighty-fifth year, while Biron, as already stated, died in 1772, a year older than Munnich.

While these generous acts and a number of excellent laws gained friends for the Emperor, he was generally disliked on account of his partiality for Germans, the nobility being offended by his liberal innovations, while the

people and clergy were angered because of his indifference toward the national religion. He did not attempt to conceal his contempt for the Russians, who resented his servility to Frederick II. of Prussia.

Peter had some eccentricities: he was drunk most of the time, and he had a mania for war, or rather the representation of it. The sweetest music in his ears was the sound of cannon, and he had them booming continually. He once ordered a hundred to be fired at the same instant, but was dissuaded when told that the tremendous crash would endanger the city. Often he staggered up in front of the picture of Frederick the Great, drank off a glass of liquor to his health, and exclaimed in maudlin tones, as he wobbled about on his unsteady legs: "You and I, my brother, will conquer the universe together."

Catharine would not have cared for these peculiarities of conduct had she not seen that her life, or at least her liberty, was in danger. Peter made no secret of his intention of divorcing her and elevating an abandoned woman to her place. The least that she could expect at his hands was perpetual imprisonment, and Catharine was the last person in the world to sit down and meekly await the pleasure of her sodden husband.

Although of German origin, she won the good-will of her subjects by ardently espousing the cause of the old Russian party. She gradually gathered round her a company strongly devoted to her interests, and the plans for a revolution were laid with great care. The revolt took place on the night of July, 1762, when the Empress, who was living apart from her husband, was brought to the various barracks, where the troops quickly went over to her side, the only exception being a regiment of cavalry of which the Emperor was colonel, and which had received many honors at his hands. They were put under arrest upon their refusal to join the movement, but not a drop of blood was shed during the revolution, which was over in two hours.

The alarming news was carried to the Emperor, who sneered and refused to believe it could amount to anything; but when he saw his friends rapidly falling away, he hurried to Oraniebaum, where, had he acted upon the advice of Marshal Munnich, he might have offered a resistance with some prospect of success; but he waited too long, and, learning that a large force was marching against him, he signed an act of abdication on condition that he be permitted to withdraw to Holstein.

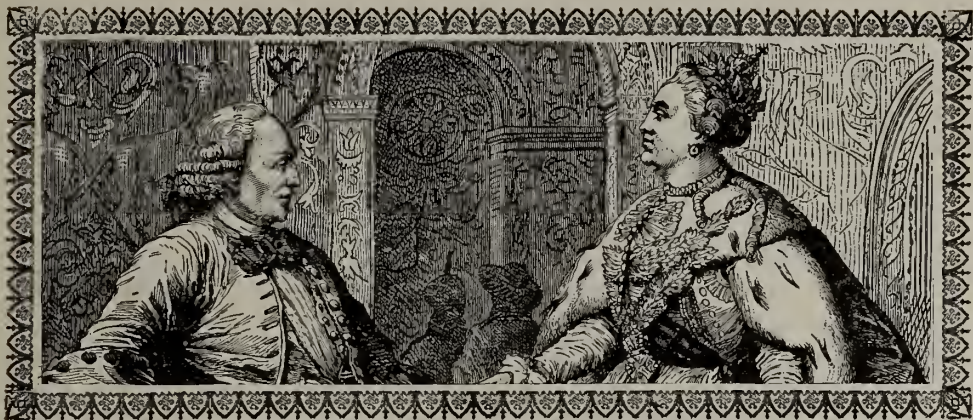
The miserable Peter was taken to Peterhof and then on his way to Schlusselburg he stopped at a little place, where on the 19th of July, 1762, he died. The official announcement was that his death was due to colic; the undoubted truth was that he was strangled by one of the conspirators.

You have not forgotten that the young Prince Ivan had been confined at Schlus-selburg, where he was visited by Peter III. Although the young man

was found to be tall and athletic, his mind was affected by his confinement, and there was little coherence in what he said. Peter seems to have felt a sympathy for the unfortunate youth, though it may have been his hatred of his wife which led him to declare his intention of making Ivan heir to the throne. Be that as it may, a conspiracy was formed to liberate Ivan two years after the death of Peter, and Catharine, who felt that he was a dangerous rival so long as he lived, did not scruple to have him "removed" in the only way which could terminate that danger.



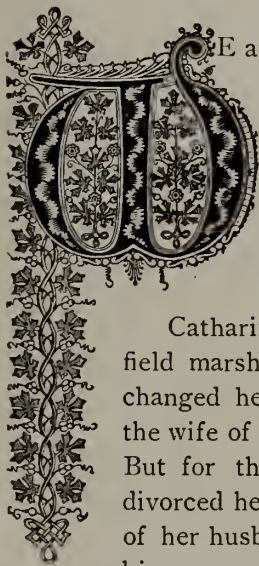
WEDDING OF THE CZAR ALEXIS



DIDEROT WELCOMED BY CATHARINE THE GREAT

Chapter CXXIV

CATHARINE THE GREAT



WE are now to study the reign of the greatest empress who ever sat on the throne of Russia, Catharine II., or as she is generally known, Catharine the Great, whose rule lasted from 1762 to 1796. We have already referred to her quarrelsome life with her husband, Peter III.; but, though he was a degraded person, with hardly a fraction of her ability, it must not be thought that she was by any means blameless in their marital troubles.

Catharine was born at Stettin, April 25, 1729, her father being a field marshal and the governor of Stettin. As has been stated, she changed her name from Sophia Augusta to Catharine upon becoming the wife of Peter, and passed from the Lutheran to the Greek Church. But for the revolution already mentioned the Emperor would have divorced her. It is uncertain what part Catharine had in the murder of her husband, but it is impossible not to suspect that she helped in his removal.

Shortly after her coronation, which was conducted with great state, Catharine took one of the boldest steps in the history of Russia,—one from which even Peter the Great shrank: that was the resumption of the ecclesiastical lands by the state. A leading cause of her husband's downfall was his attempt in the same direction. The act was a daring one, because Catharine could scarcely have reached the throne without the help of the clergy, the Archbishop of Novgorod having been specially active in her behalf.

The Russian clergy had become immensely wealthy, and in her time they

owned a million of peasants. Their enormous accretion of riches had long been viewed with disfavor by the emperors. Catharine appointed a commission, composed of lay and ecclesiastical members, which, having made the land and peasants the property of the state, assigned a settled income to the clergy and to the monks. Thus the state dominated the Church.

It was in Catharine's reign that "unhappy Poland" was doomed to feel the mailed hands of her merciless neighbors. The Poles were perhaps the most warlike nation in Europe, and the valor displayed, when they alone fought for Christendom against the Turks, won for them the splendid name of "the shield of Eastern Europe." In 1674 John Sobieski was made their king, and under him the glory of the Polish arms eclipsed that of all other nations. Sobieski formed a league with the Austrian Emperor Leopold—as already related—and when the Emperor had been defeated and his capital was about to yield to the Turks, Sobieski forced his way to Vienna, raised the siege, crushed the invaders, and drove them tumultuously back to the gates of Constantinople. In the war of succession between Charles XII. of Sweden and Frederick Augustus of Saxony, Poland was almost ruined and its destruction began. Stanislaus Augustus was the last king, and he was little more than an imbecile.

Frederick the Great of Prussia had determined upon the dismemberment of Poland. Having gained the assent of Austria, he made the same proposals to Catharine in 1770 and she agreed. Then, in 1772, the first partition took place, despite the appeals of Stanislaus and his diet, to the other powers.

In this spoliation the territories seized by the three colossal robbers were: Russia, 42,000 square miles, with a population of 1,800,000; Prussia, 13,000 square miles with a population of 416,000; Austria, 27,000 square miles with a population of 2,700,000.

Fully roused to her peril Poland put forth superhuman endeavors to save herself, mainly through political reforms of the most radical and popular character. Prussia encouraged her in these steps, and Frederick William swore to defend her against Russia; but the doom of the miserable people had already been determined upon, and the leader in the destruction was Catharine. By means of bribery and intrigues she obtained in 1791 the services of five out of two hundred of the Polish nobility to protest against the new constitution, which had been established in May of that year. This gave her a flimsy pretext for interference, and she advanced her armies, while Prussia, in spite of her solemn pledge, turned against Poland, which, under the lead of Joseph Poniatsowski and Kosciusko, fought vainly against the overwhelming coalition.

The second partition of Poland in 1793 between Russia and Prussia gave 96,000 square miles and 3,000,000 population to Russia, and 22,000 square miles and 1,100,000 population to Prussia.

In the frenzy of desperation the Poles, in 1794, rose en masse, expelled the Prussians and defeated the Russians in several engagements; but when their skies seemed to brighten, Austria, angered that she had not been allowed a share in the second partition, determined to be "in at the death," and her armies compelled the Poles to retreat. Hordes of Russians swarmed across the frontier, and the last patriot army under the lead of Kosciusko was defeated at Maceionice, October 4, 1794, he being wounded and taken prisoner. Praga was sacked, Warsaw captured, and the Polish monarchy annihilated.

The third and last partition of Poland, in 1795, divided the remainder of the country as follows: Russia, 43,000 square miles, with a population of 1,200,000; Prussia, 21,000 square miles and a population of 1,000,000; Austria, 18,000 square miles and a population of 1,000,000.

Let us give a single paragraph to the subsequent history of Poland: The last dismemberment absorbed all the country except the ancient city of Cracow, with a few miles of adjacent territory which, with grim sarcasm, was erected into a free and independent state. You will observe that of the three despoilers Russia has the largest share of territory and population. Several insurrections broke out after the extinguishment of the kingdom. A formidable revolution took place in 1830, but Warsaw was forced to surrender and the Poles were dispersed. Two years later, all that remained of Poland was declared a part of the Russian Empire. Cracow attempted in 1846 to regain its independence, but the melancholy conclusion was the subjugation of the last remnant of the country and its annexation to Austria. Another fruitless attempt to recover Polish independence was made in 1863, under the lead of Langiewicz. In the following year the Russian Government relieved the Polish peasantry from the oppressive demands of the land proprietors, and since then the country has been orderly.

Returning to the history of Russia, the Turks in 1767 declared war against her, but under the vigorous rule of Catharine the country had grown powerful enough to defeat her ancient enemy in the most decisive fashion. Small armies of Russians repeatedly put to flight great hordes of Turks. Catharine's favorite general, Orlof, brought a fleet from the Baltic all round Europe to Turkey, completely crushed the Turkish fleet in the Ægean, and had he been a little more prompt might have captured Constantinople. One source of strength to Russia was the thousands of English soldiers of fortune who were ready to fight on the side that paid best; they contributed largely to the defeat of the Turks. In the treaty of peace made in 1774 the Sultan acknowledged the independence of the Crimea, while Azov and Kinburn were ceded to the Russians, who thus pushed their way to the shores of the Black Sea.

There was a Cossack of the Don, named Pugachev, who bore a strong resem-

blance to Catharine's dead husband Peter. At least a number of people told him he looked like the dead Czar, and by and by they persuaded him that he was Peter, or at least induced him to believe he could make the peasants think so. If it seems incredible that such an imposture should succeed, it must be remembered that Russia offered the most favorable opportunities for the practice of fraud. The immense area was thinly populated, the inhabitants were grossly ignorant and superstitious, and were so savagely ground down that they were eager for any pretext to throw off the yoke which chafed them so sorely.

As might have been expected, the uprising of 1773 was accompanied by terrifying atrocities. Hundreds of the upper classes suffered dreadful outrages, torture, and death; but the innumerable dark crimes were relieved now and then by instances of devotion, many of the masters fleeing to the peasants, who helped them in assuming disguises and acting their parts so well that they eluded the vigilance of their enemies.

Pugachev was so successful for a time that Catharine was alarmed. There is no saying what triumphs he might have attained had he not repelled most of his supporters by his shocking cruelties. He was finally overthrown, when he hid himself in the depths of the sombre forests of his country, but was surrendered by some who had fought under him, because they had come to detest the savage brute. He was imprisoned in an iron cage and taken to Moscow, where he and four of his accomplices were executed in 1775.

The most famous of the favorites of the Empress was the celebrated Potemkin, a descendant of a noble Polish family, who attracted her attention by his fine appearance, and in 1762 was attached to her household. In 1774 he took the place of Gregory Orlof as her special pet, though two years later she discarded him for a younger favorite. But the remarkable mental ascendancy which Potemkin had gained over her continued, and she grew to look upon him as indispensable to the welfare of the empire. She consulted him in every measure of importance, and was invariably guided by his advice. From 1770 till his death in October, 1791, he was the true representative of the Russian policy in Europe. On Catharine's demand, Frederick the Great of Prussia and the Hapsburgs loaded him with honors and titles; but he is said to have been keenly disappointed that he was never able to gain the English order of the Garter and the French one of the Holy Spirit.

Potemkin did not interfere with the internal government of Russia, except to offer suggestions for the development of manufactures and industry, all of which were valuable and were carried out. His greatest achievements were connected with the foreign policy of the empire, especially as it concerned Turkey. He was responsible for the Turks being forced into war and robbed of their possessions north and east of the Black Sea, so as to give Russia a

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